

soil from 28 nations was deposited by ambassadors of those nations into a marble crypt into the Garden of Nations. Soil from historic shrines of the United States was also deposited into the adjacent Garden of the United States. In both ceremonies, the intermingling of the soils symbolized a united effort by people of all nationalities toward mutual understanding, harmony, peace, and brotherhood throughout the world.

The Gardens are an important part of the city's history and reflects the diverse ethnicities and cultures that have been instrumental in the city's development. The symbolic meaning of the gardens is that people of diverse backgrounds, traditions, and religions can exist side by side in peace and harmony with the freedom to exercise their beliefs and cultures.

With the addition of the Azerbaijani Garden, the Cleveland Cultural Gardens now consists of 27 individual gardens, with new gardens having been recently designated and even more under proposal. Recently, I proudly noted the dedication of the Indian and Latvian gardens. In addition to these and the Azerbaijani Garden, various stages of planning are underway for African-American, Native American, Serbian, Hispanic, Syrian, Croatian, Scottish, Nordic, Philippine, and Vietnamese gardens.

I welcome not only the symbolism of so many great nations represented in these gardens, but the actual joining of the people of these nations in Cleveland. The Cleveland Cultural Gardens is frequently visited diplomatic, educational, or trade delegations when they are visiting Cleveland. I am proud that the people of Azerbaijan now have a place in Cleveland to celebrate their culture.

Madam Speaker and distinguished colleagues, it is my hope that Azerbaijan's participation will help to fulfill our vision of the Cleveland Cultural Gardens as an international park for the people of all nations to come together in cooperation and peace. Please join me in celebrating the dedication of the Azerbaijani Cultural Garden and to welcome the Azerbaijani people to the family of nations represented at the Cleveland Cultural Gardens.

RECOGNIZING THE 2008 RECIPIENTS OF THE MCGOWAN COURAGE AWARD

HON. JIM JORDAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 7, 2008

Mr. JORDAN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I enjoy sharing positive stories about young people from our district who overcome adversity. Today, I am pleased to introduce you to eight such individuals.

Michael ("Mick") Benson, Clear Fork High School—Though autistic, this young man maintains a positive attitude as he volunteers in the community and participates in athletics, including many Special Olympics events.

Kati Jo Walters, Crestview High School—This athlete became wheelchair-bound due to an auto-immune medical condition, but through fierce determination and persistence, she remains both a great student and an inspiration to all.

Corey Sayer, Lexington High School—Growing up in a family torn apart by drug

abuse, he was taken in by the parents of a friend and now excels academically, hoping to attend Ohio State University—Mansfield upon graduation.

Jill Leiendecker, Lucas High School—A leader in and outside the classroom, she serves as student council president, crediting the love and support of her father after losing her mother in an auto accident.

Curtis Alan Remy, Madison Comprehensive High School—Impaired with nerve deafness, he earned the starting point guard position and was named captain of his high school basketball team—all in addition to his academic achievements.

Daniel Porter, Mansfield Christian High School—Through self-motivation, he overcame dyslexia to become proficient in computers, power equipment, and small engines, and has secured a job with a landscaping company after graduation.

Jessica White, Mansfield Senior High School—This courageous young lady overcame obstacles associated with hearing impairment to perform at the highest levels in both school and extracurricular activities, including basketball and track.

Penelope Mitman, Ontario High School—Despite her hearing problems, she remains an active and inspirational student, participating in student council, band, and basketball, and volunteering in the guidance office.

I am pleased to join the Rotary Club of Mansfield, Ohio, in honoring the achievements of these recipients of the McGowan Courage Award, which will be presented on May 13.

HONORING ERIE CANALWAY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR COMMISSIONER ERIC MOWER

HON. JAMES T. WALSH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 7, 2008

Mr. WALSH of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today in tribute to my friend, a dedicated public servant in his own right, Eric Mower. Eric has an outstanding record of dedicated service and contributions to the betterment of communities across upstate New York.

A highly successful civic and business leader, Eric is the chairman and CEO of Eric Mower and Associates, one of our Nation's largest public relations firms. He is also a member of numerous community boards and organizations, including United Way of Central New York, the Boy Scouts of America, and the Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce.

Eric was the initial chair of the highly successful Syracuse Neighborhood Initiative, a private-public non-profit collaboration that I launched in 1999 to revitalize neighborhoods and increase home ownership in the city of Syracuse. He capably led efforts to develop partnerships and garner support from the private sector to leverage federal resources.

Eric currently serves as chair of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission, a position he will be vacating in June. His leadership on the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission has been integral. The Corridor, founded in 2000, encompasses 80 percent of upstate New York's population, including 234 communities. Since 2002 when Eric was named chair of the com-

mission, he has led the fledgling National Heritage Corridor through much growth and success. Under his direction the Corridor Commission has leveraged millions of dollars in support and has helped multiple canal communities fund projects to enhance and showcase the canal. The successful Trails and Rails program continues to grow, and last year the Commission hosted an historic 1,000-mile Grand Canal Journey of a replica schooner visiting 28 cities and towns along the Erie Canal.

On behalf of the people of the entire 25th Congressional District of New York, I thank him for his distinguished service. I am very proud to have worked with Eric over the years. He is an extraordinary individual and brings his considerable talents to every endeavor he undertakes. While he will no longer be chair of the Commission, I'm confident that his presence as a member will continue be a great benefit to the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission.

HONORING DR. BRENDA DEEN SCHILDGEN OF DAVIS, CALIFORNIA, RECIPIENT OF THE 2008 UC DAVIS PRIZE FOR UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING AND SCHOLARLY ACHIEVEMENT

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 7, 2008

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Brenda Deen Schildgen, the 2008 recipient of the University of California, Davis Prize for Undergraduate Teaching and Scholarly Achievement. The prize is awarded to recognize scholars who are successful not only in their research, but convey their excitement and love of scholarship to students they teach. Dr. Schildgen is an eminent scholar of medieval European literature and biblical studies, but her hallmark at UC Davis is imparting her knowledge and passion for these subjects to students.

Born in London to a Russian mother and Indian father, Dr. Schildgen was the first in her family to go to college. Her Jewish mother and Muslim father sent her to a French convent in England through high school. Crossing the Atlantic for college, she earned a bachelor's degree in English and French at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, a master's and Ph.D. in comparative literature at Indiana University and a second master's, in religious studies, at the University of San Francisco.

Her path to an academic career was also unconventional. Dr. Schildgen served for 8 years as a lecturer at UC Davis before she was hired in 2002 as a full professor of comparative literature—an almost unheard-of jump in academia, where faculty typically climb, rung by rung, from assistant professor to associate professor to professor. In addition to her research and teaching, Dr. Schildgen has been instrumental in building UC Davis' highly praised University Writing Program and has been a staunch advocate for the development of writing skills not just in English courses but across all disciplines.

A scholar who works with literature in English, Italian, French, Spanish, Greek and Latin—she describes herself as "dabbling" in